



## Illinois RiverWatch Network Program Overview



Established in April 1993 under an initiative of Lieutenant Governor Bob Kustra, the **Illinois RiverWatch Network** is a partnership among Illinois citizens to monitor, restore and protect the state's rivers and streams. Part of the **AmeriCorps National Service Network**, the Illinois RiverWatch Network will meet a number of environmental protection and education needs. As *Citizen Scientists*, RiverWatch volunteers will conduct stream habitat assessments and assist in the sampling and identification of aquatic macroinvertebrates. Citizen Scientists not only learn about the ecology of river systems, but have a direct role in monitoring the health of their local river or stream. The RiverWatch Network is coordinated through the **Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR)**.

The primary objectives of the Illinois RiverWatch Network are to establish an extensive statewide monitoring network, inform and educate the public about aquatic resources, and create pro-active groups who will be stewards of and advocates for Illinois' rivers and streams. Key aspects of the program include outreach to existing community groups, businesses, and schools; environmental education for members of the general public (adults and children); and community action on local river issues, including stream cleanups, habitat assessments and biological monitoring. As a statewide affiliation of existing and newly formed river organizations, the RiverWatch Network will provide new opportunities for citizens to participate in a broad range of watershed monitoring activities.

Data collected by Citizen Scientists will be posted to an electronic bulletin board and will be used by the scientific community to gauge long term trends in the environment. Called **EcoForum**, the bulletin board was established by IDNR to facilitate an on-going electronic discussion about environmental trends, ecological indicators, energy conservation, and regulatory issues. In addition to up-to-the-minute information on activities of the Illinois RiverWatch Network, the bulletin board system contains text and data from a variety of recent reports prepared by IDNR, including the Critical Trends Assessment Project. To access EcoForum, use your computer modem to call **1-309-438-2854**, or toll free **1-800-528-5486**. EcoForum will also be available soon on the Internet communications network.

Volunteers are kept informed of recent RiverWatch activities and upcoming events through the **Illinois RiverWatcher**, a free quarterly newsletter published by the RiverWatch Network. In addition to regular features focusing on volunteer stream monitoring in Illinois, the newsletter reports on conferences and other events related to rivers, provides tips on conducting habitat assessments and biological monitoring, presents regular profiles of organizations and individuals affiliated with the RiverWatch Network, and includes a calendar of upcoming events. The *RiverWatcher* is also available electronically on EcoForum and through the DNR's home page on the World Wide Web.

The RiverWatch Network is one of thirteen Illinois AmeriCorps programs. Of these, the RiverWatch Network is the only statewide initiative devoted exclusively to the environment. AmeriCorps funding supports a statewide network of AmeriCorps Members who serve as regional facilitators for the program. These individuals are based at numerous community colleges, where they carry out recruitment, training and coordinating functions at the local level. Through AmeriCorps, the Illinois RiverWatch Network will foster the establishment of a statewide partnership which will unify the actions of existing and newly formed volunteer organizations working to "get things done" for Illinois' valuable rivers and streams.



Since January 1995, over 500 Citizen Scientists have monitored 97 streams at over 100 different monitoring sites. The Network has also participated in numerous stream clean-ups, helping nearly 850 volunteers remove over 20 tons of garbage from Illinois streams. Additional activities, including local stream habitat walks, monitoring demonstration sessions and training workshops are regularly sponsored by the Network's field staff. Although a great deal has already been accomplished, the most challenging work still lies ahead. The continued interest and active participation of volunteer organizations across the state will be critical to the success of the Illinois RiverWatch Network. Help keep an eye on the environment -- get your feet wet with the Illinois RiverWatch Network today!



## Streams Monitored in 1995

*Shown with Major River Basins*

### Basins

1. Rock
2. Fox/DesPlaines
3. Kankakee
4. Spoon
5. Sangamon
6. La Moine
7. Kaskaskia
8. Embarras
9. Little Wabash
10. Big Muddy

### Illinois Stream Facts

- Streams: 900
- Stream Miles: 32,190
- Stream miles monitored by Illinois state agencies:  
1992 - 93: 14,159 (44%)  
1984 - 85: 3,400 (11%)

### Illinois RiverWatch Network

- Citizen Scientists: 500
- Number of streams monitored: 97
- Monitoring sites: 104

Individuals interested in joining the **Illinois RiverWatch Network**, receiving the *Illinois RiverWatcher*, or arranging a local presentation or monitoring demonstration can contact:

#### IDNR / Illinois RiverWatch Network

Lincoln Tower Plaza  
524 South Second St.  
Springfield, IL 62701  
Tel: (217) 785-3418  
Fax: (217) 785-8575  
TDD: (217) 785-0211

#### Illinois RiverWatch Network

c/o The Nature of Illinois Foundation  
208 South LaSalle, Ste. 1666  
Chicago, IL 60604-1003  
Attn: Ben Barber  
Tel: (312) 201-0650  
Fax: (312) 201-0653



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*For more information concerning the Illinois AmeriCorps Program, contact the Lieutenant Governor's Commission on Community Service at 1-800-THE-LTGV (843-5848).*